VAGROM VERSE

Johannes Paulus
Hys Poemes

Ad Summam

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VAGROM VERSE

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BY

CHARLES HENRY WEBB

(JOHN PAUL)

This is your charge: you shall comprehend all vagrom

DOGBERRY

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(*WITH HAT IN HAND.*)

I dedicate my verse to those
Who really do not like my prose.
If these all like and buy my verse
Then Joan must knit a larger purse.

(*AT THE DOOR.*)

I do not come in purple dressed,
In pride of trolls and catches;
I come in rags and stand confessed
A poet of shreds and patches.

I bring to you but vagrant rhymes,
Born in all sorts of weather,
Of different moods, at different times,
Now gotten first together.

If some go lame, and the foot-gear
Of others needs revamping,
You will not think it very queer—
So long they've been a-tramping.

But since I come in humble frame,
Perhaps you'll lift your latches,
And take me in for what I am,—
A poet of shreds and patches.

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VAGROM VERSE.

ALEC. DUNHAM'S BOAT.

THERE she lies at her moorings,
The little two-master,
Answering not now
The call of disaster.
Loose swings the rudder,
Unshipped the tiller;
Crossing the Bar so,
One sea would fill her!

Foresail and mainsail
In loose folds are lying:
Naked the mast-heads —
No pennon flying;
Seaweed and wreck
Alike may drift past her;
There lies the pilot-boat —
Where is her master?

Lantern at Great Point,
  Brightly it burns ;
Beacon on Brant Point
  The signal returns.
Far out to sea
  Sankoty flashes;
White on the shore
  The crested wave dashes.

Strident No'th-easter
  And smoky Sou'-wester
Call for the pilot-boat,
  Eager to test her.
And a ship on the Bar,
  Just where the waves cast her!
Moored lies the pilot-boat —
  Where is her master?

Oh, barque driving in,
  God send that you lee get,
Past Tuckernuck shoals,
  The reefs of Muskeget.
There go minute guns ;
  Now faster and faster —
But no more to their aid
  Flies the little two-master.

For the pilot one night
  Left his boat as you see her —
Light moored, that at signal
  He ready might free her.
But not from her moorings
  Came the pilot to cast her,
Though a signal he answered —
  One set by the Master.

Gone, say you, and whither?
  Do you ask me which way
Went good pilot as ever
  Brought ship into bay?
Who shall say how he cast off,
  If to starboard or larboard?
But of one thing I 'm sure —
  The pilot 's safe-harbored!

LITTLE MAMMA.

WHY is it the children don't love me
As they do Mamma?
That they put her ever above me —
"Little Mamma"?
I 'm sure I do all that I can do.
What more can a rather big man do,
Who can't be Mamma —
Little Mamma?

Any game that the tyrants suggest,
"Logomachy," — which I detest, —
Doll-babies, hop-scotch, or base-ball,
I 'm always on hand at the call.
When Noah and the others embark,
I 'm the elephant saved in the ark.
I creep, and I climb, and I crawl —
By turns am the animals all.
For the show on the stair
I 'm always the bear,

The chimpanzee, or the kangaroo.
It is never, "Mamma, —
Little Mamma, —
Won't *you?*"

My umbrella's the pony if any —
None ride on Mamma's parasol;
I 'm supposed to have always the penny
For bon-bons, and beggars, and all.
My room is the one where they clatter —
Am I reading, or writing, what matter!
My knee is the one for a trot,
My foot is the stirrup for Dot.
If his fractions get into a snarl
Who straightens the tangles for Karl?
Who bounds Massachusetts and Maine,
And tries to "bound" flimsy old Spain?
Why,
It is *I*,
Papa, —
Not Little Mamma!

That the youngsters are ingrates, don't say.
I think they love me — in a way —
As one does the old clock on the stair, —
Any curious, cumbrous affair
That one 's used to having about,

And would feel rather lonely without, —
I think that they love me, I say,
In a sort of a tolerant way ;
But it 's plain that papa
Is n't Little Mamma.

Thus when twilight comes stealing a-near,
When things in the firelight look queer,
And shadows the play-room enwrap,
They never climb into my lap
And toy with *my* head, smooth and bare,
As they do with Mamma's shining hair ;
Nor feel round my throat and my chin
For dimples to put fingers in, —
Nor lock my neck in a loving vice
And say they 're "mousies" — that 's mice —
And will nibble my ears,
Will nibble and bite
With their little mice-teeth, so sharp and so white,
If I do not kiss them this very minute —
Don't-wait-a-bit-but-at-once-begin-it,
Dear little Papa !
That 's what they say and do to Mamma.

If, mildly hinting, I quietly say that
Kissing's a game than more can play at,
They turn up at once those innocent eyes
And I suddenly learn to my great surprise
That my face has "prickles"—
My mustache tickles.
If storming their camp I seize a pert shaver,
And take as a right what was asked as a favor,
It is, "Oh, Papa,
How horrid you are—
You taste exactly like a cigar!"

But though the rebels protest and pout,
And make a pretence of driving me out,
I hold, after all, the main redoubt,—
Not by force of arms nor the force of will,
But the power of love, which is mightier still.
And very deep in their hearts, I know,
Under the saucy and petulant "Oh,"
The doubtful "Yes" or the naughty "No,"
They love Papa.

And down in the heart that no one sees,
Where I hold my feasts and my jubilees,

I know that I would not abate one jot
Of the love that is held by my little Dot
Or my great big boy for their little Mamma,
Though out in the cold it crowded Papa.
I would not abate it the tiniest whit,
And I am not jealous the least little bit;
For I 'll tell you a secret: Come my dears,
And I 'll whisper it — right-into-your-ears —
I too love Mamma!
"Little Mamma!"

DEACON BROWN.

A DIALECTIC EXCUSE FOR A GOOD MAN.

It 's Deacon Brown yer askin' about?
He hain't been round fer a year;
They planted him last kibbage time,
Which is why he is n't here.
Fer p'raps ye 've obsarved, as a gin'ral thing,
Thet this livin' under ground
Fer a year or two don't make one feel
Pretty much like sloshin' round.

His kerricter, eh? What, old Deac. Brown?
Well, I 'm ruther 'shamed to say
Thet he wa'n't much the sort o' saint
Sot up by Harte and Hay.
He never cussed in his nat'ral life —
I mention this with consarn;
He did n't know how, though he might a know'd
Ef he hed a car'd ter larn.

But it makes it rough fer the chap thet gets
The writin' of his biog.,
To hev ter confess he 's a-slingin' ink
Over sich a bump on a log,
Who did n't amount to shucks in a row,
Who never war out on a tear,
And fer tacklin' a neat little game of "draw,"
Could n't tell a full from a pair.

Fer the Deac. jest war a common cuss
O' the most ornariest kind,
Who never looked out o' the winder o' sin,
And dursn't raise a blind.
Ye 've no idee how parvarse he was;
I 've hearn him remark — this limb! —
Thet though he war raised in a Christian land,
One wife war enough fer him.

P'raps the Deac., ef he 'd hed the rearin' o' some,
Would a panned out better in verse;
But when a man comes of stock like hisn,
It 's hard to be bad an' worse.
Onfortunit-like fer the Deac. an' me,
He 'd careful raisin' to hum;

An' yer can't 'spect much of a chap, yer know,
Onless he sprouts from a slum.

Ef he 'd been a high-toned gambolier,
Or the rough of a minin' camp,
With a bushel of sin in his kerricter,
An' a touch of Sairey Gamp;
Or an injineer or an injin thar —
Any kind of a rum-histin' lout, —
P'raps he 'd a done some pretty big thing
Fer me ter be splurgin' about.

But he jest plugged on in a no 'count way,
A-leadin' a good squar life,
Till the war kem on; then he pulled up stakes,
An' said good-by ter his wife.
I 've hearn tell a grittier man nor him
In battle never trod,
An' he did n't let down in the face of Death,
Although he b'lieved in a God.

It 's queer how he fout at Fredericksburg —
The Deac. jest went in wet,

A-pray'n an' shoot'n, an' every time
A-fetchin' his man, you bet.
Yet he wa'n't sustained by the soothin' thought,
When he fell, October 'leventh,
Thet he 'd knock'd spots out the commandiments —
An' been special rough on the seventh.

Jest over beyont thet turnip patch,
Some twenty holes yer kin see
Thet air filled by chaps who went from here
To fight 'gin Gineral Lee.
They went from here 'bout plantin' time,
They kem back when corn was ripe,
An' we buried 'em by thet walnut tree —
All chaps o' the Deacon's stripe.

We 'll cross over thar to the old man's grave,
And I guess I 'll be gittin' then —
Yer pardin, stranger, I allers unroof
At the grave o' thet sort o' men.
I 've been gassin' away promiscus like,
But now I make bold ter say,
It don't foller on a man 's a sneak
'Cause he lives in a decent way.

I know some folks reck'n contrairywise,
An' sling their ink quite free,
But they hain't got holt the right end on it,
Accordin' to my idee.
An' thet 's why I 've sort o' been chippin' in,
A-pleadin' the Deacon's excuse,
Fer you know we all can't be gamblers and thieves —
An' all women need n't be loose!

REVENGE.

REVENGE is a naked sword —
It has neither hilt nor guard.
Wouldst thou wield this brand of the Lord? —
Is thy grasp then firm and hard?

But the closer thy clutch of the blade
The deadlier blow thou wouldst deal,
Deeper wound in thy hand is made —
It is thy blood reddens the steel.

And when thou hast dealt the blow, —
When the blade from thy hand has flown, —
Instead of the heart of the foe
Thou mayst find it sheathed in thine own!

WITH A NANTUCKET SHELL.

I SEND thee a shell from the ocean beach;
But listen thou well, for my shell hath speech.
Hold to thine ear,
And plain thou 'lt hear
Tales of ships
That were lost in the rips,
Or that sunk on shoals
Where the bell-buoy tolls,
And ever and ever its iron tongue rolls
In a ceaseless lament for the poor lost souls.

And a song of the sea
Has my shell for thee;
The melody in it
Was hummed at Wauwinet,
And caught at Coatue
By the gull that flew
Outside to the ship with its perishing crew.

But the white wings wave
Where none may save,
And there 's never a stone to mark a grave.

See, its sad heart bleeds
For the sailors' needs;
But it bleeds again
For more mortal pain,
More sorrow and woe
Than is theirs who go
With shuddering eyes and whitening lips
Down in the sea on their shattered ships.

Thou fearest the sea?
And a tyrant is he, —
A tyrant as cruel as tyrant may be;
But though winds fierce blow,
And the rocks lie low,
And the coast be lee,
This I say to thee:
Of Christian souls more have been wrecked on shore
Than ever were lost at sea!

AUTUMN LEAVES.

THE melancholy days have come
  Of which the poet sings,
Of wailing winds and naked woods,
  And other cheerful things.

The robin from the glen has flown,
  And there Matilda J.
Now roams in quest of autumn leaves
  To press and put away.

These in the sere, to school-girls dear,
  Are found where'er one looks,
On hill, in vale, in wood, in field —
  But mostly in my books.

If I take up the Unabridged
  Some curious word to scan,
Rare leaves are sped of green and red,
  Or maybe black and tan.

And, too, from delf, on every shelf,
From pictures on the wall,
Autumnal leaves descend in sheaves —
With them 'tis always fall.

O autumn leaves, rare autumn leaves! —
Not rare, alas! in-doors, —
The wild wood strew, all seasons through,
But not our parlor floors!

For now I know a solemn truth
I did suspect before, —
These leaves that autumn branches bear
Are an autumnal bore.

A DITTY TO DOTTY DIMPLE.

TELL me, Miss Dimple,
Rosebud and buttercup,
Will you be as charming
When you grow up?
Will your hair keep its yellow,
Your lips keep their curl?
Will you always, as now, be
My own little girl?

Or will you grow up to be
"Grandmamma Dimple,"—
A dear little grandmamma,
Wearing a wimple,
Through spectacles peering
And snipping out follies—
Red ribbons and sashes
For grandmamma's dollies?

Some sunshine, some shadow,
Occasional showers,
But never quite clouded,
This friendship of ours;
Just one little jangle —
I remember, don't you?
When Gwendolen's tresses
Got tangled with glue.

Ah, that was a morning!
How all were appalled,
When a sudden disaster
Snatched Gwendolen bald!
I ran with my glue-pot,
But the brush was too big
For a toilet so dainty,
And we dabbled the wig.

Now, sweetheart, you promise
To live with us two,
But greatly I fear me —
Yes, Dimple, I do —
Some voice you 'll find sweeter
Than that of mamma,
Some one you 'll love dearer
Than your own dear papa.

But tell me, Miss Dimple,
  Will any young sprig
Love you just as papa does,
  When you grow to be big?
Will he fly to aid you
  With comfort and glue,
When you find your doll 's hollow,
  And the sawdust sifts through?

Will *he* guide your footsteps
  Lest they falter and fall —
Your tumbles, your troubles,
  Will he share them all?
And when others don't know
  Why the little girl cries,
Will *he* read the reason
  Writ in your blue eyes?

As has been will be ever,
  The world holds its way;
The old have their years,
  And the young have their day.
But I 'm jealous this moment —
  Of whom, do you guess?
Of that rival's arrival
  In ten years — or less!

And though seeming submissive
  While my little girl grows,
If I were a wizard,
  And my wand were this rose,
Once, twice, I would wave it —
  Yes, a third time — and say:
"Let my daughter be ever
  The Dot of to-day!"

MARCH.

The earth seems a desolate mother—
  Betrayed like the princess of old,
The ermine stripped from her shoulders,
  And her bosom all naked and cold.

But a joy looks out from her sadness,
  For she feels with a glad unrest
The throb of the unborn summer
  Under her bare, brown breast.

THE KING AND THE POPE.

THE King and the Pope together
Have written a letter to me ;
It is signed with a golden sceptre,
It is sealed with a golden key.
The King wants me out of his eyesight ;
The Pope wants me out of his See.

The King and the Pope together
Have a hundred acres of land :
I do not own the foot of ground
On which my two feet stand;
But the prettiest girl in the kingdom
Strolls with me on the sand.

The King has a hundred yeomen
Who will fight for him any day,
The Pope has priests and bishops
Who for his soul will pray :
I have only one little sweetheart,
But she 'll kiss me when I say.

The King is served at his table
By ladies of high degree;
The Pope has never a true love,
So a cardinal pours his tea:
No ladies stand round me in waiting,
But my sweetheart sits by me.

And the King with his golden sceptre,
The Pope with Saint Peter's key,
Can never unlock the one little heart
That is opened only to me.
For I am the Lord of a Realm,
And I am the Pope of a See;
Indeed, I 'm supreme in the kingdom
That is sitting just now on my knee!

CROQUET.

OUT on the lawn, in the evening gray,
Went Willie and Kate. I said, "Which way?"
And they both replied, "Croquet, croquet!"

The evening was bright with the moon of May,
And the lawn was light as though lit by day;
From the window I looked — to see croquet.

Of mallets and balls, the usual display;
The hoops all stood in arch array,
And I said to myself, "Soon we 'll see croquet."

But the mallets and balls unheeded lay,
And the maid and the youth? — side by
side sat they;
And I thought to myself, Is that croquet?

I saw the scamp — it was light as day —
Put his arm round her waist in a loving
way,
And he squeezed her hand, — was *that*
croquet?

While the red rover rolled forgotten away,
He whispered all that a lover should say,
And kissed her lips, — what a queer
croquet!

Silent they sat 'neath the moon of May,
But I knew by her blushes she said not
Nay;
And I thought in my heart, Now *that's*
croquet!

WIND-BOUND.

Oh, the wind blows north,
  And the wind blows south —
Would a man dare kiss
  His love on the mouth?

But the wind now east,
  And the wind now west —
She wears a dagger
  Under her vest!

Yes, maids have their moods —
  But a man may try;
Blow the wind as it will,
  He can only die.

THEOLOGY ON THE DESERT.

THE sands of the desert glowed hot and red,
The sun of the desert beat down,
Till it blistered the top of the Carmelite's head—
Just the round shaven spot on his crown.

An Arab swept up, bare-chested and brown;
"My tent-door stands open," he said.
The monk found a wine-skin under his gown;
The Arab gave dates and bread.

"Kind Allah, we thank thee!" the Arab cried,
When our simple repast was spread.
I fell to at once, but the monk replied,
"Nay, Sheik, thank the Lord instead!"

Then the two argued loud and the two
argued long
As to how the grace should be said;
But before they got at the right or the
wrong
I had finished both dates and bread.

When they turned to me I could not
declare
On a point so exceedingly fine;
But I rode away on the Arab's mare
With my friend the Carmelite's wine!

Just where *my* thanks are due I cannot
decide,
But honors are easy, I think;
So Allah I thank for the mare I ride,
The Lord for the wine I drink.

WRITTEN TO MISS "KITTEN."

(A VERY LITTLE BODY.)

If you had a little lover,
Little Kitten, —
A very little lover,
But *dreadfully* smitten, —
What would you say,
And what would you do,
If this little lover
Were littler than you?

To love one below you
Never is right;
How could you look up to
A man of less height?
And then a short-coming
Always is wrong.
If you loved him *so* little,
Could you love him long?

A lover should reach —
The reason, you see —
Just up to your heart
When he 's on his knee.
If he stood but that high,
I wonder, Miss Kitten,
Would you give sigh for sigh,
Or give him the mitten ?

MY BOY AT THE BERKELEY.

SAVE us! what are these soldiers all,
In uniforms of blue,
With real guns and bayonets,
And real brass buttons too?

It is a noble regiment
As one would care to see.
The veterans must be quite sixteen;
Cadets — none less than three.

And towering in the bristling ranks
There goes, as I 'm alive,
Above the average four feet six,
One giant of nearly five.

"*Attention!*" now the warriors form;
"Knees straight and shoulders square,
Heels on a line, eyes to the front!"
And look! my boy is there.

Cross-belts, waist-belt, and cartridge-box
With several dreadful "rounds;"
The gun alone can scarcely weigh
An ounce less than two pounds.

But at the order, "*Carry* ARMS!"
Up goes that gun so grim.
Why, in these arms but yesterday,
It seems, I carried him.

"*Right shoulder* ARMS!" Now look at that!
The sturdy little elf!
I 've half a mind to break the ranks,
And "shoulder" him myself.

That private with a general's air,
In uniform of blue,
Seems such a funny burlesque of
The babe that once I knew.

To-day, with belt and glittering gun
He marches in platoon;
Of old, his full equipments were
A bib and shining spoon.

Ah! different then the orders came
From the regimental head, —
"Don't tip your bowl so much, my son;
You 'll spill your milk and bread!"

I told him stories on my knee,
  Stories that were not true;
If I should tell them to him now,
  I think he 'd run me through.

For now he knows geography,
  And can such things expound
As why the seasons march straight on,
  And why the earth goes round.

Arithmetic, zoölogy,
  German and French and such, —
I 'd count myself a learnèd man
  If I knew half as much.

But what most awes me in the boy,
  And strikes me dumb and still
With a sense of insignificance,
  Is — when I see him drill;

When, with "both feet turned out alike,"
  I see him stand — MY SON! —
His martial "chin drawn slightly in"
  Behind that awful gun!

THE OUTSIDE DOG IN THE FIGHT.

You may sing of your dog, your bottom dog,
Or of any dog that you please, —
I go for the dog, the wise old dog,
That knowingly takes his ease,
And, wagging his tail outside the ring,
Keeping always his bone in sight,
Cares not a pin in his wise old head
For either dog in the fight.

Not his is the bone they are fighting for,
And why should my dog sail in,
With nothing to gain but a certain chance
To lose his own precious skin?
There may be a few, perhaps, who fail
To see it in quite this light,
But when the fur flies I had rather be
The outside dog in the fight.

"COLORED PEOPLE ALLOWED IN THIS CAR."

1860.

INDEED, this permission is worthy of praise!
You 'll allow our dark brother to ride — if he pays;
Though of course we must seat him aloof and afar —
Swart Night from blonde Day has a separate car.

Where this condescension shall cease, who can say?
Perhaps, the next thing, we 'll allow him to pray;
And the sexton of Grace — with a grace rather new —
Will pocket his sixpence and show him a pew.

By the way, I 've a curious longing to know
How the races were classified ages ago.
I wonder if Noah — that primitive tar —
When he launched the vast hull of his water-way car,
Placed a notice outside, that was good for the trip,
Permitting the " colored " to ride in his ship ;
Or did a conductor mount guard in the ark,
Admitting light skins and excluding the dark ?

And I wonder if God, when the morn he unfurled,
Thought of placing a label like this on the world ;
When he fashioned and grooved each orb in its place,
And the great solar train went whirling through space,
Was there placard affixed to planet or star
Like your " Colored people allowed in this car " ?

There 's an old-fashioned car, of a build
rather queer,
Unadapted for comfort, dark, dampsome
and drear,
And it starts from a depot perhaps you
have seen,
Where the ivy grows rankly, the willow
waves green;
It goes from our shores, but it comes not
again —
All ranks and complexions are one on this
train.

You start, my fair friend; I confess 't is
not right
That the Ethiop race should thus ride with
the white.
Ho! gather your shroud and shrink to
one side;
No need to converse though together ye
ride.
This train travels swift; at the first
station-star
Perhaps they 'll appoint you a separate
car!

Or you may not complain — I doubt on
the whole
If hue of the skin can give tint to the soul;

And 't were better by far that no scorn-
shafts you fling —
Who knows what queer changes that
morrow may bring?

Thus De Vere and old Pompey — my
point to explain —
Might knock at St. Peter's and both knock
in vain;
Or it might someway hap — I 'll give you
the doubt —
That one was admitted, the other barred out.
And which were the favored is not very
clear —
Pompey's worth might outbalance the
blood of De Vere!

Ere we part, my fair friend, let me give
you a hint,
Since you value yourself on your skin and
its tint:
When you 've taken this train that is
waiting for you,
And the shores of Eternity loom on your
view,
You may just chance to stand the wrong
side of the bar,
While your "colored" companion 's "al-
lowed in the car!"

THE TWO FURROWS.

1861.

THE spring-time came, but not with mirth;
The banner of our trust —
And with it the best hope of earth —
Was trailing in the dust.

The farmer saw the shame from far,
And stopped his plough afield:
"Not the blade of peace, but the brand of war
This arm of mine must wield.

"When traitor hands that flag would stain,
Their homes let women keep;
Until its stars burn bright again
Let others sow and reap!"

The farmer sighed: "A lifetime long
The plough has been my trust,
And sure it were an arrant wrong
To leave it now to rust!"

With ready strength the farmer tore
The iron from the wood,
And to the village smith he bore
That ploughshare stout and good.

The blacksmith's arms were bare and brown,
His bellows wheezed and roared.
The farmer flung the ploughshare down:
"Now forge me out a sword!"

The blacksmith wrought with skill that day,
The blade was keen and bright, —
And still where thickest is the fray
The farmer leads the fight.

Not as of old that blade he sways
To break the meadow's sleep,
But through the rebel ranks he lays
A furrow broad and deep.

And though his fields stand sere and
brown,
The farmer keeps his vow;
Right well he knows what blessings crown
The furrow of the plough.

"But better is to-day's success,"—
So ran the farmer's word,—
"For nations yet unborn shall bless
This furrow of the sword!"

TOO LATE.

Too late thy honeyed words,
  Too late thy tears;
A life is told by grief,
  And not by years.

And I have lived the woe
  In one brief day
Of twice three-score and ten —
  My heart is gray.

Thou canst not stir its pulse
  With hope nor fear;
The day is well-nigh done,
  And night is near.

Go! bathe no more the brow
  Thy lips once pressed —
For I am weary now,
  And I would rest.

DAS MEERMÄDCHEN.

On, Spring is blithe and Summer gay,
The Autumn golden and Winter gray;

But the seasons come and the seasons go,
All alike to me in their ebb and flow,

Since the day I rode by the cheating sea,
And one of its maidens had speech with me.

Her skin was whiter than words can speak,
The blush of the sea-shell lit her cheek;

Her lips had ripened in coral caves,
Her eyes were blue as the deeper waves;

And her long yellow hair fell fair and free
In a shower of amber upon the sea.

"Knight, gallant knight, a boon I pray:
Give me to ride thy charger gray!"

"Oh, ships for the sea, but steeds for the shore,
I 'll give thee a boat with a golden oar!"

"Nay, gallant knight, no charm has the sea;
I would dwell on the green earth ever with thee!"

For her speech was fair as her face was fair;
Had she asked my soul, it was hers, I swear!

And I led her — light as sea-birds flit —
Where my steed stood champing his golden bit.

The stirrups of silver were wrought in Spain;
My hand into hers put the silken rein.

And that is the last, though the stars are old,
I saw of my steed with his housings of gold.

Was ever such folly in all the world wide?
But who would have thought a mermaid could ride,

Or a maiden of earth, of air, or the wave,
Should fly from her love with the wings
he gave?

Faithless and loveless I walk by the shore,
Never a maiden has speech with me more.

But this brings not back my charger gray,
Nor the false, false love who rode him
away.

TO "J. W. H., JR."

(ON SUDDENLY SEEING A COPY OF THE "*NEW* MONTHLY MAGAZINE.")

It pleases me one friend to see
With a familiar mien,
And fresh as in the olden time, —
I mean the magazine;
Jocose as when we both were young,
Some twenty years ago,
When I was a contributor,
And you were — "Brooklyn Jo."

Yes, in a wicked world like this,
Where much to us seems strange,
It comforts one to find a friend,
Or thing, that does not change.
Here 's one that outwardly, at least,
Stands to old colors true,
And comes in buff, as though to say,
"I 'm an 'old buffer' too."

And yet it has not grown in girth,
Nor has it lost a page;

I try the hinges of the back —
  There is no creak of age ;
But one of us is growing thin,
  And one 's already stout ;
I am rheumatic — when it rains ;
  And you — well, *is* it gout ?

Just as of old its stories run,
  Our stories do not race ;
And for ourselves — a seemly walk
  Were clearly our best pace.
However, I was never fast,
  As all the world must know ;
And you a Joseph always were,
  Although we called you Jo.

But sadder changes years have brought :
  When I to Franklin fare
To see the sons, — whose fathers, too,
  Did business on the Square, —
I find the same old counting-room,
  But, with a sorrow keen,
I miss the voices now unheard,
  The faces now unseen.

And yet I count no empty chair :
  The dear old boys are dead,

But other boys, for whom they built,
  Are reigning in their stead;
And busy in the rooms I see
  An ever-lengthening row
Of boys in training for the toil
  To come when you boys go.

For toil and care come with the crown,
  To age the young heir's brow;
Quite reverential is my style
  When I address you now.
But there 's a river yet to cross;
  Near and more near its flow —
If we meet on the farther bank,
  I 'll call you "Brooklyn Jo!"

ONE CHRISTMAS.

WITH Morning's first blush our two little ones woke —
Like twin roses they laughed in their bed;
For the day and their rest both smilingly broke,
And their cheeks, like the dawning, were red.

Soon a patter of footsteps we heard on the stair,
Light as summer rain dropping from eaves —
Each little foot, blushing because it was bare,
Seemed a rosebud with five open leaves.

Away to the hearth-stone they stole on tip-toe,
And their laugh was a glad Christmas hymn,

Their hearts were so full that they must overflow,
And their stockings were *chock* to the brim.

There were pea-guns and whistles, and harlequin-jacks
That would dance though a monk pulled the string,
And crumpets and trumpets and all the knickknacks
That Kriss Kringle is certain to bring.

Such blasts of tin trumpets, such volleys of peas!
You 'd have thought that they stormed a Redan:
But our rampart, the sofa, they carried with ease,
And Tabby, its garrison, ran.

Now the chimney at daybreak had plagued us with smoke, —
As smokers, alas, often do, —
And here was a story to tell the small folk,
When they wondered what troubled the flue.

For we told them the steeds that Saint
Nicholas drove,
Left standing outside in the snow,
Perhaps snuggled in, filling chimneys
above,
While their master filled stockings
below.

The little ones fully accepted this creed,—
As soon they 'd have doubted their
prayers,—
And I envied their faith; we old Gentiles
have need
Of a credence as ready as theirs.

When we doubt what was dear to our
childish belief,—
For this is the wisdom of men,—
Thinking that to be wisdom that only is
grief,—
Indeed, are we wiser than then?

For oft when my soul trails her wings in
the dust,
And would rest from the struggle without,
I ask of myself: Is it folly to trust?
Is it wisdom to question and doubt?

NEW YEAR'S.

THE Seen from the Unseen
Is bounded by a breath, —
So very faint the line
We scarce know which is death.

We scarce know when to laugh,
And never when to weep;
We smile when babes are born,
We mourn when old men sleep.

Blithe rings the natal chime,
And sadly sobs the knell, —
The priest who prays below
Is wiser than the bell.

Last night while Dian slept,
Strange wonders filled the sky;
An infant softly crept,
A pale ghost shuddered by.

Twelve round and ripened moons
Dropped from their withered stem;
And twelve fair blossoms came,
To ripe and fall like them.

The clouds, like pale-faced nuns,
Hung weeping o'er a bier;
While gray and hooded hours
Were bearing out the year.

Fair speed the funeral train!
But to each year its due:
There cypress for the Old —
Here roses for the New!

Let gladness fill the cup,
We drink a courtly toast, —
Health to the living heir!
Peace to the graybeard's ghost!

THREE EXAMPLES OF ENGLISH VERSE.

Fifty thousand socialists around old St. Paul's, and English poets are writing — Triolets ! ! !

E. C. STEDMAN.

I.

TRIOLET.

WHILE they write Triolets,
The masses are rising,
With curses and threats,
While they write Triolets
(How their anger it whets !);
Nor is it surprising,
While they write Triolets,
That the masses are rising.

II.

RONDEAU.

IN corsets laced, in high-heeled shoes,
Too fine a woodland way to choose,

With mincing step and studied strut,
Is this an English goddess? Tut —
Some masker from the Parlez-voos!
O Poet! thou of sinewy thews,
Wilt thou free ways and walks refuse,
To mince instead through paths close shut,
In corsets laced?

I cannot — for I 've old-time views —
Follow the poet who pursues
The Rondeau, with its rabbit scut,
Or triumphs in a Triolet, but —
There may be those who like the Muse
In corsets laced!

III.

VILLANELLE.

JEAN PASSERAT, I like thee well;
Thou sang'st a song beyond compare —
But I 've not lost a *tourterelle*,

Nor can I write a Villanelle!
Thou did'st; and for that jewel rare,
Jean Passerat, I like thee well.

Now many a twittering *hirondelle*
The plumes of thy lost dove would wear —
But I 've not lost a *tourterelle*,

Could not, indeed, true turtle tell, —
If real or mock I could not swear.
Jean Passerat, I like thee well,

True heart that would go "*après elle*," —
An aspiration I would share, —
But I 've not lost a *tourterelle*,

And am content on earth to dwell, —
There are some men they cannot spare!
Jean Passerat, I like thee well,
But I 've not lost a *tourterelle!*

A LYRIC TO LILY.

(Who feared that I would not be industrious even if I were a honey-bee.)

If I were a honey-bee
  What would I do?
I 'll tell to no other,
  Darling, but you:
Near the heart of the Lily,
  Folding my wings, —
Think it no harm, darling,
  'T is a bee sings, —

There I would linger
  All of the day;
None of the garden
  Should tempt me away.
The Tulip, proud lady,
  I would disdain;
The Violet's blue eyes should
  Woo me in vain;

The tears of the Blue-bell
Ever might fall;
The Rose and the Woodbine
Cling to the wall;
The Cowslip and Daisy
Lie in the sun:
I would not kiss them, —
Never a one.

But alone with my Lily
Ever I 'd rest,
Shrined in the whiteness
Of her fair breast;
Think it no harm, darling, —
Only you see
That I 'd make honey
Were I a bee!

HER NAME WAS FELICIA.

WHEN soft and sweet the summer moon
Smiled down, and all was peace,
And every pulse of mine kept tune,
I learned her name, — Felice.

First on the beach, then in the brine
(Some thought it was my niece),
She laid her little hand in mine,
And said she was — Felice.

And all who sat along the shore
And watched the tide's increase,
Knew I was Felix o'er and o'er.
Did they think her — Felice?

Still swings on high the self-same moon;
Still all around seems peace.
Still sit I on the sandy dune;
But where is she, — Felice?

The summer moon still swings on high—
  Oh, summer, must you cease?
Infelicissimus am I;
  But she is still — Felice.

AS TO FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING.

It is all very well for the poets to tell,
By way of their song adorning,
Of milkmaids who rouse, to manipulate cows,
At Five o'clock in the morning;
And of moony young mowers who bundle out doors —
The charms of their straw-beds scorning —
Before break of day, to make love and hay,
At Five o'clock in the morning!

But, between me and you, it is all untrue —
Believe not a word they utter;
To no milkmaid alive does the finger of Five
Bring a beau — or even bring butter.
The poor sleepy cows, if told to arouse,
Might do so with some suborning;
But the sweet country girls, would *they* show their curls
At Five o'clock in the morning?

It is all very well to sing or to tell,
But if I were a maid, all forlorn-ing,
And a lover should drop in the clover, to pop,
At Five o'clock in the morning, —
If I liked him, you see, I 'd say, "Please call at Three;"
If not, I 'd turn on him with scorning:
"Don't come here, you flat, with conundrums like that,
At Five o'clock in the morning!"

IN A BAY-WINDOW.

Ah, yes, there 's a change in the weather;
It does look a little like snow, —
Though in this recess it seems summer,
And around us these red roses blow.

There is scarcely a theme we 've not touched on —
Secluded, but talking at large —
From the latest lyric of Locker
To the very last freak of Lafarge.

And now it has come to the weather, —
As you say, there 's a feeling of snow;
But do you not think it was warmer
In this window one winter ago?

Whose landscape, that one near the curtain?
It is good? I really don't know;
I am thinking, instead, of the picture
Then seen where these Jacqueminots blow.

Just the same sweet profusion of roses,
A lady, a silken divan,
A vase, — was it Wedgwood or Minton? —
And a gentleman holding a fan.

Was the talk then of art and the weather?
Who could say? — for their voices were low;
But none then who saw them together
Thought it looked in the slightest like snow.

Must I look at that thing on the easel? —
Naughty nymph, and a bad Bougereau!
But you plainly prefer any picture
To the one whose each detail you know.

You think it unwise to recall things?
Unwise! It is wrong, on my life!
The weather 's so different this winter, —
You are married, and I — have a wife.

Around us the same crimson curtains,
Just as warmly the Jacqueminots glow;
But I feel the same chill that you speak of, —
In the air there is certainly snow!

A DARK NIGHT.

THERE is darkness on the earth to-night,
  There is darkness in my heart;
And from the gloom to sudden sight
  Strange spectres stir and start.

And by my side these spectres stalk
  With slow remorseless tread;
Oh, God! that things like these should
    walk,
  Though graves give up their dead.

To lay such ghosts as these I wist
  All masses were in vain,
Though prayer should rise like morning
    mist,
  And beads should fall like rain.

For the dead that fill my heart to-night
  No cerements have nor crave;
You could not hide them from my sight
  Though earth were all a grave.

OUR IDOLS.

Poor idols, how they fade and fall
  Their changeful fanes within!
And only niches in the wall
  Tell that a shrine has been.

And "Ah," you cry, "then Love is nought,
  And Faith is lifeless grown!"
But is this seeming unfaith wrought
  By changefulness alone?

We love not what our idols are;
  We worship what they seem.
And if we worshipped from afar,
  We still might love and dream.

A star perchance were not a star
  If one could reach the skies;
A touch tells what our idols are —
  And then devotion dies.

Too near the shrine; ah, woe the day
That so requites a trust!
We find our idols' feet are clay,
And hurl them to the dust.

So in its rage the ruthless blast
Spares not the fairest flowers:
The sin of the Iconoclast—
His punishment is ours.

By unlit altars groping still
His fate is thine and mine—
Better a fane that false gods fill
Than one without a shrine.

MY RIVAL.

I.

He stands him all smiling and bland
Just there where the tapestries fall;
The wine cup he holds in his hand
Throws a dabble of red on the wall.

See, he smiles to himself as he sips
Of his wine in the alcove apart!
Will he smile when my dagger's thin lips
Shall drink the red wine of his heart?

II.

There 's a dead man out in the night,
Under the stars he lies;
And the dews in a monotone drip, —
Cold tears from unsorrowing eyes.

— He was my rival once.
Whose now is the better fate?
He married the girl of his love;
I murdered the man of my hate!

DISCARDED.

LAST night I lay on her breast;
To-day I lie at her feet.
Then to her heart I was pressed;
Now — you tread on me, sweet!

Ah, lightly as possible, pray —
Grace for your one rose of last night!
If perhaps I look faded to-day,
Are you quite so fresh in this light?

And though nice of you dropping that
tear, —
There are some who may think it my
due, —
Did it never occur to you, dear,
That the flower may have wearied of you?

IN AQUARELLE.

WHAT of Nantucket?
  Quakers and quiet;
Westerly winds, —
  And some sameness of diet.

What of Bar Harbor?
  Mermaids that menace;
Flirtings, striped skirtings,
  Lots of lawn-tennis.

Better my cat-boat —
  Only two in it
(Wind from the westward) —
  Bound for Wauwinet!

WHICH?

We parted, and mine eyes were wet.
Thine, too, I think were brimming --
With tears or brine? Love, I forget.
Could it be both? I think not — yet
You know we were in swimming.

SONNET.

LAST night in blue my little love was dressed;
And as she walked the room in maiden grace
I looked into her fair and smiling face,
And said that blue became my darling best.
But when, next morn, a spotless virgin vest
And robe of white did the blue one displace,
She seemed a pearl-tinged cloud, and I was —
space!
She filled my soul as cloud-shapes fill the
West.
And so it is that, changing day by day, —
Changing her robe, but not her loveliness, —
Whether the gown be blue, or white, or gray,
I deem that one her most becoming dress.
The truth is this: In any robe or way,
I love her just the same, and cannot love her
less!

SLOOP AND CUTTER.

A HAPPENING TO THE "HILDEGARD."

THE "Hildegard" she had sprung a knee,
Or a rib, perhaps —
(The nomenclatter does n't much matter
Aboard of a yacht when they spring — who knows what?
And the thingum-bob-stay has been carried away —
And never brought back — by the what 's-its-name tack;
And with implied hitches at ideal breeches,
The tar late so jolly growls gruffly, "By golly!"
Or, "Shiver my timbers, there 's a leak in the limbers!"

But this is a lapse:
Starting fresh from "perhaps")—
Something that laps and stops up gaps—
Rib, knuckle, or knee—
Gave way, and no longer d—d out the sea
(That 's not the word quite that we dash
out of sight,
But I blanked it, you see, lest the editor
might),
Which now with a din came rushing in,
Drowning the gin,—
Metamorphosing Chateau into singularly
flat eau,—
Dampening sheets, ruining meats,
And cheeses and chintzes fit for Kron
Prinzes,
Filling with water everything fillable
(Till even Schiedam was n't worth its last
syllable);
Very little the wonder that our skipper
said, "Thunder!"
(Thought perhaps something harder as he
looked at the larder)
And sent a hand—and two feet—up the
mast
To hail the first pump or packet that
passed

(With that hole in the bow our bark was
bow-wow).
But never a ghost of picket or post
Hove up on our view, — though we
heaved all we knew.
Nothing showed up, in fine, but abundance
of brine,
Which now came in thicker (spoiling more
liquor),
Till it certainly looked that our goose was
cooked,
And that crew and passengers all were
booked.
When just at this juncture, — when the
horrible puncture
In our starboard knee (which admitted
the sea)
Gaped wider and wider, showing all inside
her,
And 't was just on our lips that we 'd pass
in our chips, —
From aloft came the hail, "Sail ho! ho!
a sail!"
(Why they always say "ho," I really don't
know;
But it seems to be a way of the sea)
And of course to the stranger we sig-
nalled our danger, —

To show him our leek set an onion at the peak;
And that more they might guess at our terrible stress,
From a port-hole we showed her a case once filled with "Roederer."
She was sailing close-hauled, but aghast and appalled,
When they made out our case there was changing of base:
"At the sheets! are you ready? Now keep her off — steady!"
And with the wind free down she ran on our lee.
"Ahoy!" said she, and "Ahoy!" said we
(They always begin in that fashion at sea).
And then with insistence they offered assistance.

"Since you must be fed, why, I'll board you," she said.
"Or if that does n't gee, then you may board me.
All my windows are bay, and they look on the sea.
The one thing you 'll miss, to round out your bliss

And make it supreme, is just a little
beam!"

Now when our stout skipper, with a glass
in his flipper,
From a sort of a trestle made out that
strange vessel,
"Great Scott!" we heard him mutter,
"it's just a blamed cutter!
Go aboard *that* thing — I and my crew?
I'll be fuller indeed (and dee deed) if I do!
Though never a man of us leaves this spot,
If we drown at all it'll be in a YACHT!"
None argue with Herman when he
issues a firman!

That's how we came to come home in a
dory;
And I'd feel rather hurt if you doubted
my story.

DO I KNOW HIM?

Do I know him, this same Mr. Bright,
  Who writes all the books and reviews;
Who parcels Parnassus by right,
  And dictates terms to the Muse?

Why, we bow at the club, for form's sake
  (Both belong to the Fiddlededee),
But I never ask him what he 'll take,
  And he certainly never asks me.

We cut in as partners at whist,
  And then I know him to my cost;
My trump signal always is missed,
  The odd trick just as certainly lost.

We meet on the Pillowsham nights —
  You know those hebdomadal treats,
Where one young woman recites,
  And another young woman repeats.

Where it 's literature, music, and art
(With agnostics by way of relief), —
When he takes the floor, I depart;
Life is so uncommonly brief.

We are friends, I 'm perfectly sure;
But this seems the *status*, alas:
He thinks *I* am but a *flaneur* —
I think *him* a ponderous ass.

LOVE'S ANTE-CREMATORY FAREWELL.

"O William!" she cried, "strew no blossoms of spring,
For the new 'apparatus' might rust;
But say that a handful of shavings you 'll bring,
And linger to see me combust.

"Oh, promise me, love, by the fire-hole you 'll watch;
And when mourners and stokers convene,
You will see that they light me some solemn, slow match,
And warn them against kerosene.

"It would cheer me to know, ere these rude breezes waft
My essences far to the pole,
That one whom I love will look to the draught,
And have a fond eye on the coal.

"Then promise me, love," — and her
voice fainter grew, —
"While this body of mine calcifies,
You will stand just as near as you can to
the flue,
And gaze while my gases arise.

"For Thompson — Sir Henry — has found
out a way
(Of his 'process' you 've surely heard
tell)
How you burn like a parlor-match gen-
tly away,
Nor even offend by a smell.

"So none of the dainty need sniff in dis-
dain
When my carbon floats up to the sky;
And I 'm sure, love, that you will never
complain
Though an ash should blow into your
eye.

"Yes, promise me, love," — and she mur-
mured low, —
"When the calcification is o'er,

You will sit by my grave in the twilight
glow —
I mean, by the furnace door.

"That often, my love, while the seasons
revolve
On their noiseless axles, the years,
You will visit the kiln where you saw me
resolve,
And leach my pale ashes with tears."

THE FRIEND OF AGES AGO.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot?
— Yes, if you 'd just as lief as not.

THERE are several things that trouble one's age,
And work for a man much woe,
Such as gout, — and doubt, — debts that *will* run,
And rhyme that will *not* flow.
But when all has been said, do we not most dread,
Of the many bores that we know,
That ubiquitous ban, the woman or man
Who knew one "ages ago"?

In youth — you were young, and foolish perhaps;
You flirted with high and with low,
Had one love on the hill, and one down by the mill,
Yet never were wicked, ah, no!

And this friend knew you in a far-away
way,
In a way that was only so so,
Just enough to give hue to the cry about
you:
"Oh, I knew him ages ago!"

You are married now and quite circum-
spect;
Your pace, like your speech, is slow.
You tell in a bank, keep silent in church,
Are one it is proper to know;
But this vigilant friend will never consent
That your virtues unchallenged shall
go,
Though she never demurs, but only avers
That she knew you "ages ago."

And sure I am that if ever I win
To the place where I hope to go,
To sit among saints, perhaps the chief,
In raiment as white as snow,
Before me and busy among the blest —
Perhaps in the self-same row —
I shall find my ban, this woman or man
Who knew me "ages ago,"

And shall hear the voice I so oft have
heard —
A voice neither sweet nor low —
As it whispers still with an accent shrill
The refrain that so well I know:
"Oh, you need n't be setting much store
by *him;*
This new angel 's not much of a show.
He may fool some saint who is n't ac-
quaint;
But *I* knew him ages ago."

MY FATHER.

Who hailed me first with rapturous joy,
And did not fret and feel annoy
When the nurse said, "Why! *she's* a boy!"?
My Father.

Who gave that nurse a half-a-crown,
To let him hold me — did I frown? —
Of course he held me upside down.
My Father.

Who ne'er to cut my hair did try,
Imperilling by turns each eye,
And leaving all the lines awry?
My Father.

Who set me in the barber's chair
Instead, and had him cut my hair
Like my big brother's, good and square?
My Father.

Who, when I had a little fight
Because Tom tore my paper kite,
And trousers, said I did just right?
My Father.

Who, when Tom licked me black and blue,
Did not turn in and lick me too —
Saying *'t was his duty so to do?*
My Father.

Who told me courage always wins,
And taught me to "put up my fins,"
Till I could knock Tom off his pins?
My Father.

Who did not always make me plank
My pennies in that old tin "Bank,"
Where I could only hear them clank?
My Father.

Who, when I wished to buy a toy,
Ne'er thought 't would give me much more joy
To send tracts to some heathen boy?
My Father.

Who bought for me the loveliest toys,
And said, "Though books he more enjoys,
We can't indulge these little boys"?
My Father.

Who gave me next a glorious gun;
And who at last — when all was done —
Left all he had to me, his son?
My Father.

TO MY BRIC-À-BRAC BROTHERS.

Four and twenty tea-bells
  Tinkling little chimes;
Just as many poets
  Tinkling little rhymes.

When great bells are silent,
  Little ones may ring;
When great poets are voiceless,
  Little ones may sing.

Little bells and — brothers
  (Do not take it ill),
All vibration ceases
  Once your tongues are still.

There are tones and voices
  That can never die;
I can only think of
  Tennyson and "I!"

Still there may be others
  Of the rhyming gentry,
Who each month slip past some
  Editorial sentry;

Bound to live, — "16mo," —
  So let us agree:
I 'll read all your verses —
  If you sing of me.

TALK.

It seems to me that talk should be,
Like water, sprinkled sparingly;
Then ground that late lay dull and dried
Smiles up at you revivified,
And flowers — of speech — touched by
the dew
Put forth fresh root and bud anew.
But I 'm not sure that any flower
Would thrive beneath Niagara's shower!
So when a friend turns full on me
His verbal hose, may I not flee?
I know that I am arid ground,
But I 'm not watered — Gad! I 'm drowned!

THE VISIT.

WEARING a suit of simple gray,
I called upon a friend one day.

He straight unlocked his cedar room;
My senses swam with the perfume.

From shelves that hung at wondrous height,
He took down wear that dimmed my sight:

Breeches that buckled at the knee, —
"Smallclothes," but much too large for me, —

Laced doublets, and cross-gartered hose;
It was a wondrous wealth of clothes.

But 't was not meant that I should share;
They were not shown for me to wear.

'T was only meant that I should see
How very fine a man was he.

And while he walked in brave array,
I sat there in my simple gray:

Think you that when I left his door,
I went much richer than before?

RECOLLECTIONS OF GRANT.

"I KNEW him well," the old man said;
"We were together in fight:
I with the Left when the charge was led;
The General of course had the Right.

"I stood by his side," the old man said,
"When a bullet whizzed down the line
Scarce forty feet from the General's head —
And but little farther from mine.

"Did I blench at the storm?" the old man said,
"Ah, sir, the bravest may;
And from childhood up I 've been always afraid
Of finding myself in the way."

"Shall I write thee down, O Hero," I said
"As a friend of the fallen chief,

And blazon thy name beside that of the
dead
In a glorious alto-relief?"

"Nay, his friends were many," the old
man said,
"A greater distinction I want,—
Just say I 'm the one who when all was
done
Wrote no 'Recollections of Grant!'"

THE WIDOW'S MITE.

THE widow's mite! Ah, who with eye
Unmoistened does the dole descry?
  Dropped in response to misery's moan,
  This largess of the woman lone
Can king or emperor outvie?

Gentle the hand that does supply
The modest alms; but if she try
  Her power, bound hand and foot we own
                The widow's might.

Right well we know how maidens shy,
When swains approach, still turn and fly;
  But when pursued by lovers prone,
  And begged to make her mercy known,
The widow *won't*, — ah, then we sigh,
                The widows might!

TO THE COGGIA COMET.

Eccentric orb, shot madly from thy sphere,
Planet without a plan, dost travel on thine ear,
A courier out of place,
Through wide expanse of space,
Bent on a bender?
Nebulous known, indef'nite, fluctuating,
Of volume vast, but thin, wide-circulating,
Thou holy, high, translated Legal Tender,
Approach, come nigher! obliging acquiesce,
For, lo! neat-handed gentry of the Press
Would fain go through thee,
And I — though unaccustomed quite to vapor,
And not detailed by any morning paper —
Am here to interview thee.

Give us thy lineage, and thy plans define,
Length over all — and *sure* thy Water Line;
We have one end of thy ancestral vine,—
We know thy sire
To be Coggia.
But round the record; tell us of thy dam.
Art thou not worth one? Is thy flourish flam?
Art thou indeed but a transparent sham,
In all tradition linked with woe and slaughter —
In fact, a vapid cheat that won't hold water?

But whether yes or no,
Pray tell us further, *àpropos*
Of water, — ramping round, eccentric, crabbed, —
Ere thou com'st nearer, tell us, art thou rabid?
Has Sirius bit thee?
Art threatening still because the starry cops
Shoot like our own, and after many pops
Have failed to hit thee?

If nought 's the matter
With thy *medulla oblongata*,
And thou 'rt not mad, — though at thee thus we stare, —
Tell us the chance of fancy stocks up there;
What are the movements now of bull and bear?
Do things all round look blue?
Art thou the ghost of Daniel Drew?
That Milky Way, where all the small stars meet,
Is 't there, O Comet, that they milk the street?
Aquarius with his pot,
Who waters, waters, with one ceaseless drip,
And only rests at times to dry his scrip, —
Is that man Sage, or not?
Earnings of railroads, are they sometimes "pooled"?
The little fishes, are they ever fooled?
And the Great Bear, *is* his true name Jay Gould?
Would things roll smooth along the taurine track
If 't were not for one baleful orb — Cammack?

Thou canst not tell! ah, yes, one ought
to know, —
Thou 'rt up above, and brokers meet
below!

Have they newspapers up above the
moon?
In thee I seem to see a glorified "Tribune,"
Some "Times" translated, or a "World"
made sweet.
Thy tail, what is it but an extra sheet?

That tail, O Comet, gives another text
For questions: ends it here, complete,
convexed,
Or is 't "to be continued in our next," —
In the next world, like Braddon's, Wilkie
Collins',
And that most "Ancient History" known
as Rollin's,
Which, when we thought we 'd captured
its last "colume,"
Always outflanked us with another vol-
ume?

Swaggering through space with baleful,
angry glare,
Art thou the "bouncer" of the upper air?

Wilt knock us out — unless we "up and
dust,"
Snatch us bald-headed, bust our ancient
crust?
If that 's thy game, put up thy fins; why,
dumb it,
Earth 's full of grit. Thou canst not come
it, Comet!

TO C–N–Y M. D–P–W, ESQ.

AN ODE.

[IF UNRECOGNIZABLE BLANKS ARE HERE SUBSTITUTED FOR REAL NAMES, IT IS SIMPLY OUT OF DEFERENCE TO THE MODESTY OF INDIVIDUALS.]

I wish I were you,
C. M. D–p–w!
Once I wished to be a king,
A Cham, or some such thing;
In my thirsting titular
I 'd have even been the Tzar.
Then they spelled it with a "C,"
Now we see it with a "T;"
But it matters very little
How they spell a fellow's title,
When he 's sitting on a bomb
Which may explode quite near,
And the title questioned here
He may haply read quite clear,
Next breath, in Kingdom Come.

But before this bomb device
I thought it would be nice
Just to sit upon a throne,
In a state all, all mine own,
Beneath a Russian sky
(Every other man a "Ski"),
And say "we" instead of "I," —
"We" to this and "we" to that
(*E. g.*, "We smell a rat"), —
And then issue a fiat,
Suppressing by decree
All who did n't smell like me, —
I mean, all who 'd not agree, —
As the Tzar does on his throne,
And R–id in the Tribune.

Now, rather I 'd be you, —
Be C–un–y M. D–p–w!
In the realm where you preside
Blowing up is never tried.
There 's a deal of clubbing, true,
And some blowing off they do;
But this treat is different far
From that given to the Tzar —
On one's nerves it does n't jar.

Then at dinner-tables, too,
When the air with smoke got blue,

I 've seen sinners seize on you;
Seen the ruddy chairman rise
With a twinkle in his eyes, —
Showing plainly by his air
That he thought his joke was rare,
Haply for the first time bruited, —
To say he 'd been depewted
To call upon D–p–w —
And then look right at you.

Now I know revenge is weak,
It is nobler to be meek;
But provoked by such a tweak,
Even I 'd get up — and speak!

Yet on the whole, D–p–w,
I would rather far be you
Than any king or pope
I know[1] — or ever hope
To know — in all Europe.

Why, even the fore-mentioned Tzar,
Wide as *his* foot Steppes are,
Cannot travel so far as you in your car,
And without the least danger of scath or
of scar.

[1] Personally, that is.

But if rightly I read, Mr. D–p–w,
There is trouble ahead, even for you.
There are threats in the air, ominous threats,
And I hear, here and there, rumors and bets
Of some station awaiting — at least, nominating —
"C–un–y D–p–w."
And with "oh" and "alas," — for I know how you pass
As a coin good and true, —
I say in my soul, Will they now find a hole —
A hollow in you?
Though current before, accepted and hugged,
When it comes to *this* pass will they say you are "plugged."

As it is, all around are devoted,
Unquestioned you 're quaffed to and quoted,
And even the Press never hazards a guess
That so much as a taint of wickedness,
The faintest tinge that is not true blue,
Colors D–p–w.

And watching afar the swing of your car, —
Which it seemed to me you had hitched to a star, —
I have wondered what your small vices are,
If, indeed, you had any that did n't show.
Run for an office, — then I 'll know!
For there 's nothing ever you 've said or done
That 'll not be shown to the noonday sun.
Of course you 've never done anything bad,
But were you Saint P–l, or Sir Galahad,
Or even J–n P–l — but I 'll nothing add.

I will only say, — and I mean it, too, —
If you take this white bait that they offer to you,
And go in for the regular White House stew,
I shall cease to repine that your shoes are not mine.
And I 'd rather by far stand in those of the Tzar
When the canvass is through;
And I *would n't* be you,
C. M. D–p–w!

THREE WALL-STREET WAIFS.

I.

THE LAY OF DAN'L DREW.

It was a long lank Jerseyman,
And he stoppeth one of two:
"I ain't acquaint in these here parts;
I 'm a lookin' for Dan'l Drew.

"I 'm a lab'rer in the Vinnard;
My callin' I pursue
At the Institoot at Madison,
That was built by Dan'l Drew.

"I 'm a lab'rer in the Vinnard;
My worldly wants are few;
But I want some pints on these here sheers —
I 'm a-lookin' for Dan'l Drew."

Again I saw that laborer,
Corner of Wall and New;
He was looking for a ferry-boat,
And not for Daniel Drew.

Upon his back he bore a sack
  Of stuff that men eschew;
Some yet moist scrip was in his grip,
  A little "Waybosh" too.

He plain was long of old R. I.,
  And short of some things "new."
There was never another laborer
  Got just such "pints" from Drew.

At the ferry-gate I saw him late,
  His white cravat askew,
A-paying his fare with a registered share
  Of stock "preferred"— by Drew.

And these words came back from the
    Hackensack,
  "If you want to gamble a few,
Just get in your paw at a game of *Draw*,
  But don't take a hand at DREW!"

II.

DREW AND THE COMMODORE: A LEGEND OF THE STREET.

CORNELIUS, the Great Cornerer,
A solemn oath he swore,
That in his trousers pockets he
Would put one railroad more.
And when he swore, he meant it,
That stout old Commodore.

Swear words have a significance
That makes one's marrow creep,
When launched by men whose early home
Has been upon the deep;
We think the old salt's briny oath
He easily can keep.

It served him well, the Commodore,
His battling with the breeze:
Knowing the ropes, he took and swung
The biggest line with ease,—
As one should do who all his life
Had been upon the seize.

Not following now the seas, instead
You saw him behind bays.
He almost always held a pair, —
And none were swift to raise:
Being on stocks, 't was plain that he
Must have his way and ways.

A railway king — ay, every inch,
And standing six feet high;
His arms all railway branches,
His feet all termini —
If you doubt me, there are his tracks
To witness if I lie!

He was the Hudson River's bed,
The Harlem's bed and Board,
The Central's too, — whose cattle-cars
Through half the country roared;
His pockets were the depots in-
To which these railroads poured.

Such share of shares were quite enough
To serve a common mind,
But not the stout old Commodore's, —
He for an eyrie pined,
As though he were the eagle bird
By chance — and never blind.

But brooding on this Erie sat —
And quite on the same lay —
Good Drew, who, feathering his nest,
Affirmed, by yea and nay,
Before he 'd budge he 'd see them all —
Much farther than I 'll say.

Said he unto the Commodore,
"Your barque is on the sea,
But do not steer for Erie's ile,
Since that 's been struck by me.
Go, man of sin, and leave me here
To my Theology!"

To railroad men the dearest ties
On earth are railroad ties;
So little wonder Daniel spoke
In anger and surprise.
Tears would not flow; the Commodore,
It seems, had dammed his eyes.

"When Greek meets Greek, then comes
the tug —"
Which is all wrong, you know.
Unfriendly fires burn fast enough
Without the help of tow, —
Especially when Coke is on,
And several lawyers blow.

Such eerie sights, such eerie sounds
Came from this Erie crew,
It seemed, indeed, a den of Lines
Prepared for Daniel — Drew!
Not strange that he at last resolved
To make his own ado.

Fleeing from jars — perhaps the jug —
He thought of foreign lands,
And to his brethren said, "Arise,
These Bonds put off our hands;
We will into New Jersey, where
My Seminary stands."

'T was thus Drew's barque — and eke his bite —
Fell on the Jersey shore;
Shut in by Fate as by a gate —
Or by a Commodore.
There was no drewbridge in the land,
On which he could cross o'er.

The gage of war that he threw down,
A "broad-gauge" — and a free —
Was picked up by the Commodore,
A gauger great, per sea;
Who as he liked could get and hold
The weather-gage or lee.

'T was plain that if in the tournay
  Where these queer knights did tilt,
The Commodore should keep his seat
  And Drew should be the spilt,
Drew might make tracks, but Erie would
  Thenceforth be Vander-built.

While if, in drawing to his hand,
  The Commodore did not
Quite fill his flush, and Drew's draw
    should
  Beat him but by a spot,
He 'd lose his age and lose the deal,
  And Drew would take the pot.

Just how the joust did terminate
  Nobody knows nor cares;
No need to ask how fares the fight
  When two fight for our fares,
And whiche'er one does win will plough
  The public with his shares!

We scarce did sing, Long live the Ring!
  But Daniel long lived he, —
Until his School conferred on him
  Exceeding high degree;
Doubling his D's until, indeed,
  He was, at last, D — D!

As for the stout old railway King,
  Who once did rule the wave, —
And sometimes rather waived the rule
  Odd tricks to serve or save, —
In games like this, to me the King
  Looks very like the Knave !

III.

ON THE REOPENING OF A TRUST COMPANY.

BREAK, break, break,
On thy "Old Lake Shore," T. C.,
Then resume and take down thy shutter,
But not, if you please, for me.

Oh, well for the Orphan Boy
That they shell out the swag to-day!
Oh, well for the Lady in Black
That again they 've concluded to pay!

And the wise old noodles go on
Discounting most any one's bill;
And it may be the touch of a varnished hand
Is busy again at the till!

Break, break, break!—
You are open again, I see;
But the bouquet that clings to a dog that was dead
Is not aromatic to me!

(*L'ENVOI EXTRAORDINAIRE.*)

It has (once) been said that of tongue or pen
The saddest words are, "It might have been."
But it seems to me — and it may to you —
These words in a way are consoling too.
For instance, — end of the road at last,
My rhymes and I now things of the past, —
You can surely say of my vagrom verse
That, all things considered, it might have been — worse.
For I give you my word, as a minstrel bold,
Songs even less tuneful I might have trolled.
If there seem too much from my scrap-book store,
There's comfort in this: it might have been — more.
For I pledge you my faith, both as poet and man,

There are bolts yet unhurled in my barbican.
And this burden of verse that you now have resigned,
It might have been epic — if I'd had a mind!

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